

Sabbath School Lesson #4 – To Love *the* Lord Your God – 16-22 October 2021

Christ would have us know that the law of God is the law of love. Said Moses, when rehearsing the law in the hearing of the people: “Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). And in like manner the great Lawgiver had Himself summed up the second table of the law saying: “Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:18). So, too, when one asked the Saviour: “Which is the great commandment in the law?” (Matthew 22:36-40). Jesus answered him not by giving a new law, not even by presenting the old law in a new form, but by simply quoting these precepts from the Old Testament. And Paul testifies: “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law;” “for love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:8-13). That is, he who loves his neighbour as he does himself, has fulfilled the law; for before anyone can have such love he must love God with all his heart, and in loving God with all his heart and his neighbour as himself he fears God and keeps His commandments which is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Sunday: To Love God – Life comes through keeping the commandments (Matthew 19:17; Revelation 22:14); but Christ is the life of the law, and He dwells in the heart by faith in His word. Thus the law as the real righteousness of God, and not the mere form, is life, and has power to give life. David said, “This is my comfort in my affliction; for Thy word hath quickened me” (Ps. 119:50). “Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart” (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). How in the heart? By faith. And how does faith come? by hearing. The idea is that, just as at the last day those who hear the voice of God will be raised to life, out of their graves, so *now* those who really hearken to His commandments will receive the life of them. Accordingly the Lord testified as follows: “Hear, O My people and I will testify unto thee; O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto Me, there shall no strange God be in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god” (Psalm 81:8-9). If the children of Israel had only listened to the Lord continually, He would have assured their salvation. While they were listening to Him, He would have taken upon Himself the responsibility of keeping them free from idolatry and all sin. So when in the law, He says “Thou shalt not,” He means not simply to forbid our doing the things spoken of, but also to assure us that we shall not do them if we but hear in faith, recognizing Him in them. So through the prophet he says, “O that thou hadst hearkened unto My commandments; then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (Isaiah 48:18). And again He exhorts, “Incline your ear, and come unto Me, hear, and your soul shall live” (Isaiah 55:3). This is a comforting assurance. But one thing should not be lost sight of, and that is that the righteousness which comes by the hearing of faith is not a mere passive righteousness. It is the active righteousness of God.

Monday: To Fear God – To fear God is the whole duty of man. The first angel calls out with a loud voice, “Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Revelation 14:7). The God we are to fear and worship is the Creator; “God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9); He is the Father, who created all things through His Son. The first angel calls us to worship One God. This One God is whom the apostles and their company praised and prayed to: “And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is” (Acts 4:24). This One God is whom His Son Jesus Christ praised: “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight” (Luke 10:21). The God that the first angel calls us to worship is not a trinity. Your understanding of God is going to impact on who you worship. The three angels’ messages are to correct worship. If you do not get it right with the first angel, as who to worship, then no need to go to the second and third angels’ messages. Only the first angel tells you who to

worship. The first angel calls us to worship the One God who created through His Son. The trinity doctrine calls us to worship 'a unity of three coeternal' gods that "made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Thus the trinity doctrine destroys the angels' messages. If you fear God, you will teach others the truth. If you fear to teach the present truth, if you fear to show those in your sphere of influence that trinity is Baal worship, you fail to fear God. If you fear disfellowship, you will retain your membership in earthly Church books at the risk of losing your membership in the heavenly book of life. The fear of God turns the fear of disfellowship out of mind; there is no room for the fear of disfellowship where this great fear of God is; the fear of God being greater than the fear of disfellowship, it disturbs not, but rather the fear of God brings as great peace as the fear of disfellowship only brings trouble in the mind. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Psalm 119:165). Fear God, not men, and do not fear disfellowship, for membership while souls worship Baal is worthless. But not all will suffer disfellowship.

Tuesday: He First Loved Us – "God is love," and "we love Him because He first loved us." It is this perception of His character which first draws us to Him, – "the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Romans 2:4). By this we are made partakers of the divine nature, that is, adopted into the family of God. As sons of God, it necessarily follows that our acquaintance with Him must become more intimate. It is this intimate acquaintance with God which multiplies peace to us. "Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace" (Job 22:21). In Galatians 4:6-9 the apostle Paul makes a knowledge of God equivalent to a state of sonship. It is evident, therefore, that the knowledge of God, of which the apostles speak, is far more than the simple knowledge and belief that God exists as Creator of the world.

Wednesday: "If You Love Me, Keep My Commandments" – Love and obedience are inseparable. Those who refuse to keep His commandments do so because they do not love Him. In that heart wherein the commandments of God are written, love and faith will both abide. But love to God must be expressed in some tangible form. The love that consists merely of a dreamy sentimentality, and indefinable "good feeling" that is dissipated by a call to the performance of some duty, comes far short of the love that will win eternal life. True love consists in doing, not in simple feeling; and words and protestations of affection are of little value unless accompanied by corresponding deeds. Said the Saviour: "If ye love, keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And again: "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 7:46). The apostle John also says: "And hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1 John 2:3); also, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments" (1 John 5:3). When the lawyer quoted, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc, the Saviour replied, "thou hast answered right; this *do* and thou shalt live." There is something for us to *do* as well as to *feel*. A person can no more love God and fail to manifest it by deeds, than he can ever live without breathing.

Thursday: The First Commandment – "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). This was placed at the head because it is the foundation of everything. We may say that all the rest of the law is summed up in this first commandment. For having no other gods before the true God, means sincere heart worship of Him, and perfect worship of God means obedience to all His requirements. The first four commandments embody our duty to God, and the last six our duty to man. But the last six are secondary to the first four, since love to God is first. Love to God necessarily presupposes love to man; "for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). Paul says that "there be gods many and lords many" (1 Corinthians 8:5). A god is an object of worship. Worship is reverence; one worships whatever his thoughts centre upon. As everyone must think, and must have some object toward which his thoughts and efforts are directed, so everyone must have some god. If it is not the living God, it is some god in His stead. Some trust in riches (1 Timothy 6:17); such make money their god (see Job 31:24-28). In Colossians 3:5, also Ephesians 5:5, covetousness is declared to be idolatry. The covetous man's mind is absorbed in the contemplation of some earthly object, which shuts out thoughts of God – a covetous man is an idolater. Others worship appetite and the baser passions. Paul speaks of such men as "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:19).